

Come Home for the Holidays

Based on parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

THREE parables are presented in Luke 15: the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son. These three parables are not simply three ways of stating the same thing. There is a difference. The sheep went lost through *foolishness*. The coin was lost through *no fault of its own*. The son *deliberately went lost*. The focus of this series is on the third parable.

How appropriate that the story of the Prodigal Son follows Jesus' assertion of God's seeking love. However, labeling this story as the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* is misleading... for the hero of this story is NOT the son but rather the Father. Perhaps it would be more accurate to call it the *Parable of the Prodigal Father* (or, as William Barclay suggests, "the Loving Father"). This parable raises some important questions:

Does God really love us? Like the younger son, there are many ways in which we've rejected God, wandered in far countries, spent the good gifts God has given us in selfish and often sinful pursuits. What is God's attitude toward us now? When *we* turn to God, what can *we* expect?

And then there is the older son. This son was unmoved by his brother's return. He was angry, and he criticized his father. In his anger the elder brother refused the love the father offered *him*—even though the father went out to entreat the angry son to attend the feast. He was more concerned about rules than relationships.

Whose character do we bear? Are we like the younger son... rebellious and seeking our own way, rejecting God's presence? Or the elder son, whose anger at love and at forgiveness so blinded him that he could not even see that *he* needed forgiveness too? Or are we like the father, whose love overcame and made a way for the dead to live again?

How exciting that when we have experienced the Father's love revealed in the Christ-Child born in Bethlehem's stable (the **Gift of the Father**... to *US*), we are invited to be like Jesus, the faithful Son, freed forever from the cold self-centeredness that cuts people off from one another and from God.

Join us as we explore this simple, yet powerful short story that has changed the world.

Whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever you have done,
God invites you to Come Home for the Holidays.

December 6, 10:30am: **The Compassionate Father**

December 13, 10:30am: **The Rebellious Son**

December 20, 10:30am: **The Selfish Brother**

December 24, 7:00pm: **A Father's Gift**

December 27, 10:30am: **A Celebration of the Father's Gift**
